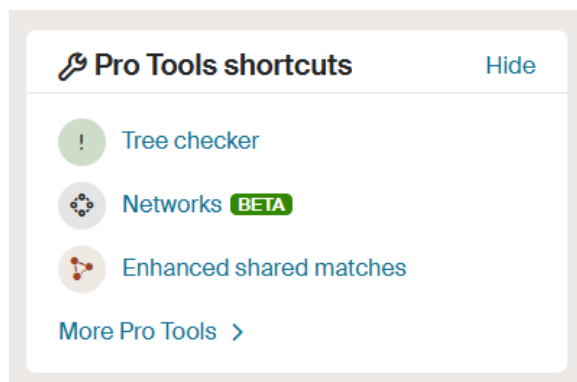# Ancestry's New Network Feature

[Video Link](#)

Overview

In this lesson you are learning about Ancestry's new **"Networks"** feature which is part of their **Pro Tools** add-on package. To find it, go to ancestry.com, login, and on the home page there is a Pro Tools shortcut menu on the right.

Ancestry says *"Ancestry Networks is available in Beta on March 6th [2025] to all global Pro Tools customers and will be available to more subscribers later this year."*

The concept here is to be able to group people into networks, whether they are family or not. This helps with the FAN Club (Friends, Associates, and Neighbors) strategy. Thanks to Elizabeth Shown Mills for this concept.

Beta

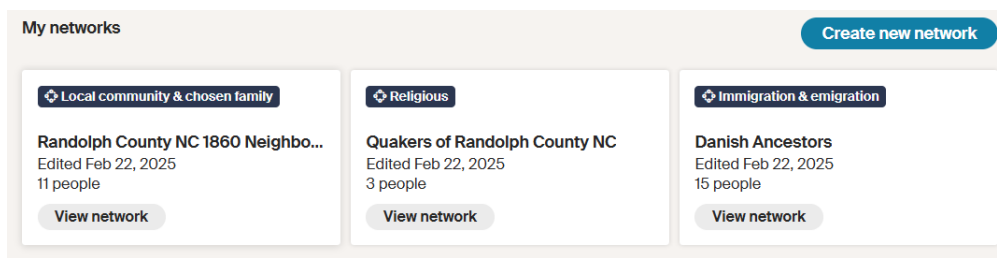Keep in mind that this feature is currently in beta and is an evolving product.

Network Examples

Here are just a few examples of the types of networks you can create using this tool.

Census - You could create a network from a census record showing the neighbors and or other family members close by.

Religious or Church Group - You could create a network of families that belong to the same church or the same religion.

Immigration - You could create a network of family members that traveled together and immigrated from one place to another. For example, several family members that are on a passenger list.

Event - You could create a list of people that appear in a wedding registry or some other special event where there is a list of people that signed a guest book.

Creating a Network

Once in the pro tools area, click "create new network." With your goal in mind, you can see the distinct types of networks that you can create. Ancestry is prompting you with some ideas (shown here). Using "something else?" Is a way for you to create a custom network or simply click skip at the bottom of the page (not shown).

In my example on the previous page, I decided to create a network from the neighborhood of **people from Randolph County, North Carolina in the 1860 census**. My goal here was to figure out what other family members may be in the neighborhood and group them together. In this case, I was wondering what potential ancestors were in the same place at the same time with the same surnames known to me. Next, I wanted to create a different **immigration network** of the ancestors that arrive together from one specific passenger list and those I knew came from and lived in Denmark. Many of these people I strongly suspect are family, I just haven't connected them to the tree yet.

What kind of network is this?

This helps us offer suggestions to help build your network.

Family & life milestones
Birth, Marriage, Death, DNA, Heirlooms

Immigration & emigration
Home country, Naturalization, Departures/Arrivals

Shared experiences
True crime, Natural disaster, Politics, Group/organization

Local community & chosen family
Neighborhoods, House histories, LGBT+, Fictive kin

Religion
Local congregations, Religious leadership, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Mormon/LDS or Quaker

School & work
Students, Educators, Classrooms, Clubs, Job/Occupations, Industry

Enslavement
Enslaved peoples, Slaveholding families, Emancipation/manumission, Freedom Seekers

Atrocity & displacement
Indigenous/Natives peoples, Refugees, Holocaust, Genocide

Military
American Revolution, Military Base, Civil War, WWI, WWII, etc.

Sports & entertainment
Musicians, Hall of fame, Olympics and artists

Burial place
City/public, military, religious, lost/abandoned or African American cemeteries

Something else

Networks in Ancestor's Profile

As you begin to create these networks, your ancestors are automatically updated with a tag for that network in their profile. These are different from tags.

You can add a person to multiple networks you've already created from the drop down menu where it says, "add to."

Begin with a Goal or Strategy in Mind

In short, this is cluster research. We use clusters of people to help us find more records, understand what is going on in the community, who lived nearby, and migration patterns. The possibilities are endless when you start to understand how to use cluster research in your genealogy.

Example

Let's say you see a lot of people in a census record that have the same last name as your direct ancestors. You suspect that they are family, but you're not sure how just yet. By adding them to a network for a specific place and time (i.e., 1860 census), you can keep track of these people, who they married, their children, and proximity to your ancestors.

Along the way you may discover that one of these people in your network share a property line with your ancestor. If they did, might they be related? Could they be a brother of your ancestors? Could your ancestor's father have divided the land into smaller parcels among his children and the unknown person living next door to your great uncle (or some other relationship)? Researching him might provide more records and insight about your direct ancestor.

Limitations

Attaching Sources

As of this writing, there does not seem to be a way to attach a source or image to multiple people at one time or say, everyone in the network you are viewing. This would still need to be done individually. However, all those in the network, when viewing their individual profiles would see the networks in the lower right column.

Attaching Everyone from a Record

As of this writing, there does not seem to be a way to attach everyone globally in an index of a record to a network. For example, adding everyone from a passenger list or census record. While this would be convenient, I don't expect Ancestry to add this feature. Time will tell.

Creating New Networks from Multiple Networks

I think it would be interesting to be able to create a third network from people that appear in more than one network.

For example, all those people in my **1860 Randolph County, NC network** with all those who came on the same ship (another **immigration network**) to **create a third new network** of those who appear in both networks.

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